

EXCLUSIVE! THE COLORS DESIGNERS PAINT THEIR OWN ROOMS, PAGE 22

House Beautiful

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The World According to Bunny & John

It's impossible to distill a lifetime of style into a few gems of wisdom, but we asked decorating's first couple to try. Here, trailblazing decorator Bunny Williams and legendary antiquarian John Rosselli share the rooms and ideas that make life worth living.





"The living room in our house in Punta Cana, Dominican Republic, is filled with pieces we have had for years in other houses. The large-scale furniture makes the room feel comfortable for a group, or for one person who has just picked up a book."



John and I are like bookends. We share a love of houses, collecting, gardens, dogs, and especially a love of people. The essence of our lifestyle comes from a wish to share our homes with friends and family. We enjoy making them feel comfortable, serving delicious home-cooked meals, and filling the rooms with flowers from our garden and plants from the greenhouse. Our homes are personal; they show who we are, what our interests are, and how we like to live.

Our style of decorating is a combination of the two of us. John loves beautiful objects and furniture. He is always on the hunt for one-of-a-kind treasures for his shop. Needless to say, things also find their way to our house. I love arranging furniture in a room, thinking of how the guests we invite will sit. Sometimes we disagree about decoration. John is more serious about the pieces and their provenance, and I get seduced by color and fabrics. But he is always happy with the result.

Both of us grew up with lots of family in our lives; me in Virginia, he in New Jersey. We both love entertaining. John is the cook, and I'm the one who brings the house to life. In a way, this is our hobby. We're not athletes; we'd rather spend the day in the garden than on a golf course. Planting, picking, deadheading, watering, and being outside with the dogs running around is a perfect summer day for us.

John is a wonderful, natural cook. He can go into the kitchen and prepare a dinner for 12 in a couple of hours. We always have a buffet so guests can serve themselves. We serve dessert at the table—often a pie or cobbler made with whatever fruit is in season. The meals are simple and uncomplicated. The most important thing is that we are relaxed, because then our guests are relaxed. That's why everything is done before they arrive.

When we are alone, we often look through books and magazines. We love books by other designers, books on the great houses of Europe, and garden books, where I find new ideas and learn about plants and trees. We love to travel and do it often, but we also find inspiration from our library at home.

Living well makes us feel good. Having a beautiful, organized, well-maintained living space sets the tone for our way of life. When we share our homes with friends we are, in a way, giving them the most valuable gift...love and friendship. —*Bunny Williams*



1.

Offer hospitality, not just a drink.

“Show, don’t tell, what you’re serving with a well-appointed bar. Guests feel more at home when they can help themselves.”



2.

Rethink the centerpiece.

“Look beyond flowers and vases and pluck an object from the mantel, scatter shells from afar, or display farmers’ market fruits and vegetables.”







3.

For a lively table, invite interesting pieces.

“Tablesettings are like guest lists: Diversity is key. Try patterned tablecloths, palm leaves as placemats, and rattan chargers for layer upon layer of interest.”